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TOURISM IN FUNCTION OF SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT OF THE GRADAC RIVER IN SERBIA

Saša Virijević Jovanović¹; Vesna Pijevac²;

Abstract

Increased actuality and significance of the concept of sustainable development has dramatically changed the flow of tourism activities that used to be oriented towards environmental goals. Appropriate environmental protection management is the basic precondition for the development of tourism in future. The main goal of the sustainable tourism is to enable people to enjoy and gain knowledge about the natural, historical and cultural characteristics of the environment, while encouraging the economic development and well-being of the community and future generations. Regarding the importance of sustainable tourism, the paper explores the possibilities of developing the destination of the Gradac River in Serbia. The research emphasizes the tourism potentials of the Gradac River gorge as a region of exceptional characteristics, but at the same time the challenges of sustainable development of this destination have been analyzed.

Key Words: *sustainable tourism, Gradac River, ecotourism, sustainable development, environmental protection management*

JEL classification: L8

Introduction

Tourism has developed into a global phenomenon, i.e. one of the most important sectors and the engine of economic growth worldwide. According to data from the World Tourism and Travel Council (WTTC), the tourism and travel industry contributed almost 10.2% to the world's

¹ Saša Virijević Jovanović, PhD, associate professor, Faculty of Applied Management, Economics and Finance, Belgrade, Jevrejska 24, +38163259083, sasavirijevic12@gmail.com

² Vesna Pijevac, M.Sc., High tourism school, Belgrade, Otona Župančiča 4, +381653161117, vesnapijevac@gmail.com

gross domestic product (GDP) in 2016, and employed 292 million people across the globe (WTTC, 2016).

Until the beginning of the 19th century, tourism and travel were the privilege of the rich and high social classes, when there was a sudden, explosive development of tourism, which became massive, dynamic and international. The globalization and development of information and communication technologies, as well as the growth of the living standard have contributed to the decrease of the distance, irrelevancy of the location on the planet Earth and the occurrence of new forms of communications among people. These affected also the changes in tourism sector, so that tourism and travels nowadays are regarded as basic life needs of every contemporary human being. Transformations and changes in tourism have influenced not only the tourism destinations, the offer and demand, but also affected the forms, models, ways and styles of travelling. According to the World Tourism Organization (WTO, 2016) in 2007, 898 million tourists participated in international tourism, and in 2016 their number increased to 1.2 billion. The estimates of the World Tourism Organization are that by 2030 the number of tourists participating in international tourism could amount to 1.8 billion (UNWTO, 2017).

However, such dynamic development of tourism, which obviously has great economic and social significance, should also be analyzed from the aspect of sustainable development. Tourism today faces the challenge of continuing its long-term growth, but according to environmental standards and with respect to the needs of future generations.

The impact of tourism on sustainable development has a twofold effect, positive and negative at the same time. On the one hand, the development of tourism has positive effects on sustainability as it contributes to spreading the idea of peace, connecting the cultures and nations, the reduction of poverty, the development of people's conscience about the preservation of nature and the environment. However, the development of tourism inevitably brings with it negative effects such as pollution (air, water, solid waste, noise, and visual), destruction of historical monuments, endangering plant and animal species, etc.

Considering the concept of sustainable tourism development, the paper analyzes the example of the Gradac River, in order to point out the

exceptional importance of this destination, which represents the symbol of eco-tourism in Serbia.

Tourism towards sustainable development

The relevance and importance of the sustainable development concept has significantly changed the course of international economic activities, which used to be oriented towards environmental goals. Doing business in accordance with the principles of sustainable development neutralizes the boundaries between traditional microeconomics and macroeconomics, representing the ecological economy as the best, most complete analytical framework for assessing the performance of business activities (Virijević Jovanović et al., 2017).

The most frequently quoted definition is from the Brundtland Report, which defines sustainable development as development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs (WCED, 1987).

Bearing in mind the significance of the sustainability concept, General Assembly of the United Nations has adopted 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The Agenda defines Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and targets that will stimulate action over the next 12 years in areas of great importance for humanity and the planet. The 17 Sustainable Development Goals include the following (United Nations, 2015):

- Goal 1. End poverty in all its forms everywhere;
- Goal 2. End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture;
- Goal 3. Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages;
- Goal 4. Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all;
- Goal 5. Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls;
- Goal 6. Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all;
- Goal 7. Ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all;
- Goal 8. Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all;

- Goal 9. Build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialization and foster innovation;
- Goal 10. Reduce inequality within and among countries;
- Goal 11. Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable;
- Goal 12. Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns;
- Goal 13. Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts;
- Goal 14. Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development;
- Goal 15. Protect, restore and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainably manage forests, combat desertification, and halt and reverse land degradation and halt biodiversity loss;
- Goal 16. Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels;
- Goal 17. Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the Global Partnership for Sustainable Development.

In announcing the launch of the SDGs the United Nations explicitly called on businesses to play a central role by harnessing their creativity to address the challenges posed by its new sustainable development agenda.

Each of the 17 goals is a challenge for modern tourism, which has positive and negative effects on sustainable development. The goals 1 and 8 are closely related to the positive effects of tourism industry that generates income for the host economy as well as foreign exchange earnings. The Goals 2, 6 and 7 are associated with the fact that tourism development often implicates infrastructure improvements such as better water and sewage systems, roads, electricity, telephone and public transport networks, thus improving the quality of life for residents (UNESCO, 2009). If we take for example the Goal 3, the role of sustainable tourism is to contribute to better health and well-being. Regarding the Goal 11 tourism is important because it enables restoration of existing historic sites, buildings and monuments, transformation of existing old buildings into tourist facilities, protection of natural resources, adoption of administrative and planning measures for the protection of certain areas, building environmental awareness and others. The Goal 13 is related to the fact that climate change and the depletion of the ozone layer are two mayor effects of the increasing global traffic and industrial development, in which tourism plays an important role.

Regarding the Goal 15, tourism should play an important role, not only in the conservation and preservation of biodiversity, but also in respect for terrestrial ecosystems, making efforts towards reducing waste and consumption, conserving flora and wildlife, and awareness-raising activities (The 17 Sustainable Development Goals, 2018).

The Agenda 2030 especially emphasized the importance of sustainable tourism, as a driver for jobs creation and the promotion of local culture and products (United Nations, 2015).

Besides the positive effects of tourism that contribute to achieving the goals of sustainable development, there are numerous negative effects of tourism development, such as: pollution of water, air and soil, sound pollution, reduction of green areas due to construction of tourist facilities, destruction of flora, fauna and cultural and historical monuments. A picturesque example of dishonest tourists is the action taken by the non-profit organization "Ocean Conservancy". Volunteers around the world have cleared 27,400 km of coastline, riverbeds and seabed during an international cleansing day. During this action they have collected, 1.9 million cigarettes, 1.6 million plastic bottles and about 822 plastic caps (Ocean Conservancy, 2018).

Guided by the principle that "we did not inherit the planet from our ancestors, but we borrowed it from our descendants", the tourism industry and all institutions in the field of tourism are facing the task of sustainable and responsible development in order to preserve all the essential values of the environment as part of a tourism product and achieving the equilibrium in which satisfying the present needs of tourists will not jeopardize meeting the needs of future generations.

World Tourism Organization defines sustainable tourism as tourism that takes full account of its current and future economic, social and environmental impacts, addressing the needs of visitors, the industry, the environment and host communities (UNEP and UNWTO, 2005). The European Commission has adopted its own definition for sustainable tourism, according to which it is „any form of development, improvement or tourism activity that respects the environment, preserves in the long term the natural and cultural resources and is socially and economically durable and equitable.

The most common forms of sustainable tourism are: the ecological tourism (ecotourism), the green tourism, the soft tourism, the rural tourism and agro tourism, community tourism and responsible tourism.

The sustainable tourism development of the Gradac River

The main goal of sustainable tourism is to enable people to enjoy and acquire knowledge about the natural, historical and cultural characteristics of the environment, while encouraging the economic development and well-being of the local community. The Gradac River represents an example of ecological tourism that uniquely connects the experience in a natural environment with historical and cultural monuments of Serbia.

The gorge of the Gradac River – an area of exceptional characteristics

The gorge of the Gradac River has been declared as an area of exceptional qualities and a protected natural good of great importance, which belongs to the II category. The area of exceptional characteristics includes the ravine of the Gradac River with attractive geomorphological characteristics (the Caves of Degurićka, Kraljeva, Visoka, Gradska, and Baćina), hydrographic watercourses, hydrogeological characteristics of the catchment area, habitat of rare and endangered plant and animal species, complex and various forest ecosystems and monuments cultures of great significance (Ekološko društvo Gradac, 2018). The main reasons that contributed to the fact that the gorge of the Gradac River became a protected natural area of II category are nature's preservation and richness of plant and animal species.

What particularly distinguishes the Gradac River is the fact that this river is the richest with fish in Serbia. The river is known for its brown trout. The attractive appearance and the requirements of high fishing skills in catching it, give this fish a leading role in sports fishing.

What also makes the Gradac special is a great wealth of flora and fauna. This destination is a natural habitat for about 130 species of butterflies, out of 150 species described in the territory of Serbia, 25 species of amphibians and reptiles out of 40 described in Serbia, and 100 species of birds (Ekološko društvo Gradac, 2018). In the area of the Gradac River, there is a significant number of mammals, one of them is the river otter that presents the symbol of this destination. On the list of animals that

inhabit the area of the Gradac River there is a significant number of rare and endangered species, which makes this destination of nature even more valuable and important from the context of sustainable development.

The Gradac River and its gorge are an oasis of almost untouched nature, supplemented by speleological, archaeological and religious objects. In particular, the Monastery of Ćelije, the museum of the Holy Bishop Nikolai, as well as the monastery Lelić, are especially distinguished. Tourists who like to walk have the opportunity to use some of the trails and reach the remains of the Basilica church from the fifth century and the old city. Besides, the Gradac River Canyon is passable all the way through, but it is occasionally necessary to override the river.

The preserved nature of this area, witnessed by the impressive plant and animal species, is inextricably linked with the beauty and purity of the Gradac River. The river in several places makes smaller or larger lakes where swimming is possible. The most interesting and most visited picnic and swimming places are Livadica, Ploče, Anatem, Kriva vrba, Šareno platno, where the Ecological Society "Gradac" made a bivouac intended for guests.

The water quality of the river is the first category, so many enthusiasts in the upper course enjoy in drinking fresh water. This is particularly significant regarding the fact that less than 1% of the world's water is readily available for direct human uses (World Wildlife Fund, 2018).

The protected area of the Gradac River towards sustainable development

The development of tourism in protected areas that is in line with the principles of sustainable development is important because it provides the opportunity for visitors to explore and experience the natural resources, but at the same time contributes to better life of the local population.

While tourism has many potential benefits for conservation, it can also have negative impacts on wildlife and habitats (Cabrini, 2013):

- Damage to or destruction of ecosystems and habitats (deforestation);
- Disturbance of wild species;
- Alterations to habitats and ecosystems;
- Unsustainable consumption of flora and fauna by tourists;

- Intensive water demand from tourism;
- Deterioration in water quality (freshwater, coastal waters) and sewage pollution.

It is therefore important, when managing the development of tourism in a protected area, to meet the needs of nature, animal and plant species, with the needs of the local community, tourists and other stakeholders.

There is no single correct way to protect and restore river flows since each river system is different and each approach must be tailored to the specific situations. Managing the area of Gradac River Gorge has been entrusted to the Ecological Society "Gradac ", an association from Valjevo city, which was founded in 1986. This is a unique example in Serbia which shows that a non-governmental organization (NGO) is allowed to manage a protected area.

The water quality control is performed by the Public Health Institute Valjevo, in accordance with the Regulation on hygienic correctness of drinking water, every fifth day on nine river points. Water quality is important for humans, but also for flora and fauna, especially bearing in mind the fact that species dependent on freshwater ecosystems are the world's most endangered group of plants and animals.

In the protected area of the Gradac River, a third level regime is established, which prohibits the following (Uredba o režimima zaštite, 2012):

- Change of geomorphological characteristics, quarrying of stone, gravel, opening the borrow soil and sand, depositing soil and rubble, etc.
- Discharge or disposal of refuse, sewage and of untreated water into the Gradac River, its tributaries and land.
- Disposal of communal and industrial waste in the whole area.
- Abstraction and impoundment of water sources throughout the area.
- The exploitation of forests and forest areas in a manner that would lead to its degradation.
- Destruction and disturbance of rare plant and animal species.
- Construction of industrial, commercial and infrastructure facilities, except the infrastructure equipment that is in a function of presentation and use of the natural resource and its value,

- Construction of housing, utility and other buildings on undeveloped plots, pending the development of protection programs,
- The entry, research and other work in caves without the permission of the authority, and
- Construction of weekend houses.

The regime allows the following actions:

- Construction and infrastructure environment of cultural monuments, which ensures the functioning of the monastery and its economy, HE Degurić, existing ponds and ZTP,
- Archaeological, conservation and other works at archeological sites, as well as their equipment, reconstruction of the mills and their use in a manner suitable natural good,
- Selective use of forests,
- Application of modern breeding - sanitary measures, and
- Care and presentation of natural goods.

However, the existence of mentioned bans does not prevent tourists and local population from behaving inappropriately, by leaving the garbage after their excursions, threatening in this way the river and its ecosystem. Disposal of liquid and solid waste made by the tourism industry is a great problem for many developing countries and regions worldwide. In order to prevent these actions, the ecological society “Gradac” takes care of preserving the natural wealth of the river. The guard service of the association hires 1 to 2 guards, depending on the financial means. Furthermore, guardians, together with volunteers and fishermen, collect garbage from the destination every day. During July 2015 Ecological society “Gradac” and volunteers organized an action to clean the part of the river bed of the Gradac and on that occasion collected tens of garbage bags, consisting of plastic and other packaging, through plastic crates, plastic chairs, tires for cars. The additional problem is also an inadequate fence of garbage depot that is located in Divčibare, enabling the trash to reach the Gradac River in periods of high water levels or when snow melts.

Sustainable tourism development of the Gradac River: potentials and challenges

Nowadays, the travelling in tourism, beside vacation ad relaxation, is conditioned also by health reasons and the needs for fun, culture, religion

and sports activities (Mladenović & Virijević Jovanović, 2018). These tendencies in tourism, especially the increase of the demand for tourism of special interests, conditioned that the sports-recreational travelling become one of the fastest growing trends (Gibson, 1998). The area of the Gradac River has exceptional tourist potentials, which connect nature-based tourism with sport, recreation and cultural tourism. However, in order to enable the development of tourism, it is necessary to provide adequate infrastructure capacities that will fit into the natural environment. In addition, for the sustainable development of tourism on the Gradac River it is important to carefully approach the management and promotion of the destination, as well as to include all interested stakeholders in these processes.

Tourism of special interest – potential for fishing and nature-based tourism

Sports tourism emphasizes both, travelling motivated by direct sports engagement (recreational or professional), as well as travelling motivated by attendance at a certain sports event or manifestation. The contents, in the sports-recreational tourism can be at a free choice, organized forms of sports recreation and programmed sports recreation. Tourism on the Gradac River unites different motives of tourists giving them the opportunity to experience cultural tourism and nature-based tourism, as well as to participate in recreations such as fishing, swimming and hiking. Nature-based tourism is a term, used for tourism that takes place in a natural environment and is therefore widely applied. As there seems to be a great request for activity and outdoor recreation in the tourism market, there is a growing demand for nature-based tourism on global level (Orams, 1999). The most dominant form of tourism in destination of the Gradac River is tourism of special interests, particularly fishing. Fishing tourism is a type of nature – based tourism since the nature is an important part of the fishing tourism experience, either as the core element in the tourism product or as part of the surroundings of the core experience (Aas, 2008).

Recreational fishing is defined by the FAO Code of Practice for Recreational Fisheries (2008) as: “fishing for aquatic animals that do not constitute the individual’s primary resource to meet basic nutritional needs and are not generally sold or otherwise traded on export, domestic or black market”. Fishing in its various guises has long been a favored form of water-based recreation and, for some a necessary means of

subsistence. Despite the history of fishing tourism being closely related to the development of tourism in general, fishing tourism has received little attention from tourism research. A lot of leisure studies have focused on different aspects of recreational fishing that are of relevance for fishing tourism, but there is limited research on recreational fishing as tourism (Borch et al., 2008).

As with many “survival” activities, fishing has become a popular sport motivated by challenges of competition, whether against others or against the self (Jennings, 2007). Tourism of special interest, which includes fishing, has become more and more popular in recent years. Therefore, fishing activities and fishing heritage can be an important attraction in this “experience economy”. According to Jennings (2011), sport fishing and fishing are special interest forms of tourism attractive to specific niche markets. The nature of these recreational activities and their market profiles set them apart from the wider ambit of mass tourism.

The Gradac River is of great interest for fishermen from Europe. Since 1986, the Gradac has been harvesting about 1000 - 2000 pieces of brown trout per km of river flow each year. Besides the brown trout, the Gradac River is also a habitat for numerous species of fish such as golden spined loach, chub, gudgeon, lappet, grayling, minnow (toadstool), pliska, brown barbell. During the whole course of the river the principle “Catch and Release” is applied, since overexploitation of fish is not allowed. Fishing on the Gradac River also has a competitive character. During the June the competitors gather in order to take part in Federal Competition fly fishing.

The challenges for sustainable tourism development

The main obstacles to the sustainable development of tourism on the Gradac River are: the lack of strategic planning of tourism in this area, inadequate statistical monitoring of tourist flows, lack of accommodation capacities due to limited financial resources, as well as insufficient promotion of the Gradac River itself.

The strategic management and planning

Appropriate environmental protection management is the basic precondition for the development of the tourism in future. Today's appearance and preservation of the Gradac river is due to a large number

of enthusiasts and nature lovers, primarily people from Valjevo, but also from other parts, who by personal engagement, and often with their own means, preserved this natural pearl in its present condition. However, in order to achieve a sustainable tourism development in the protected area of the Gradac River, it is not enough to have only the enthusiasm of a few people, but a good strategic approach to management that involves all stakeholders, enterprises, communities, regions, tourists, ecologists etc. Only joint cooperation of different stakeholders can provide solutions that will reconcile social, economic, cultural and environmental demands.

In order to make a good plan for the tourism development of a destination, it is also important to have relevant information about the market and tourist trends. Equally important are the data about the number of arrivals and overnight stays of foreign and domestic tourists. However, this kind of data is not easy to find, because there is no defined methodology which would enable to follow the tourism flows at Gradac River destination. Therefore, the conclusions in this research are made on the basis of an interview with representatives of ecological society “Gradac”, who have indicative data on the number of foreign tourists, and based on data from Tourist Organization Valjevo, that have a general character because they relate to the municipality and the city of Valjevo.

Figure 1: *The number of foreign tourist arrivals, municipality Valjevo, Valjevo city, Divčibare*



Source: *Tourist Organization of Valjevo*

Figure 1 shows the number of foreign tourist arrivals in municipality Valjevo, city of Valjevo and Divčibare. The data relate to 2013–2017 period. We assume that the number of foreign tourists who stayed in the protected area of the Gradac River is included in data related to Valjevo municipality. During the selected period of time, presented in Figure 1, the highest number of tourist arrivals in municipality Valjevo is realized in 2013, when it amounted 5,759 tourist arrivals. The lowest number of tourist arrivals was reported in 2016, as it amounted 3,967 arrivals.

Besides the number of foreign tourists, it is important to know the total number of tourists, which is presented in Figure 2. These data show that during the 2011-2017 period, the highest number of tourist arrivals was recorded in 2017, while the lowest number of tourist arrivals was recorded during 2014. If we look at the graph we can see that those data were made due to the large participation of domestic tourist arrivals at the destination of Divčibare.

Figure 2: *The number of domestic and foreign tourist arrivals, municipality Valjevo, Valjevo city, Divčibare*



Source: *Tourist Organization of Valjevo*

The infrastructure

Annually, the destination of the Gradac River is visited by about 500 foreign tourists, who stay from 3 to 7 days (an interview, Ecological society “Gradac”). The number of foreign tourists would undoubtedly be higher if there are adequate accommodation capacities. Foreign tourists, fishermen are interested in coming, but they want to be placed on water or

near the water, in nature surroundings, within the company of other fishermen. For this reason, the accommodation capacities in the city of Valjevo are not the solution, regarding that the fishermen as tourists represent a specific market niche, interested exclusively in natural environment.

The possible solution could be a construction of the accommodation complex on the Gradac River itself, which would fit in the natural surroundings. But, such construction has not been realized yet, although there is a permit and plan for building the complex on part of the river, known as Šareno Platno.

The key factor which disables the construction of accommodation capacities in the protected area of Gradac is the lack of financial resources, regarding that Ecological society "Gradac" is the only subject that was showing the interest and willingness to spend money in order to protect the area as well as to foster the tourism development. But those financial resources were modest, regarding the fact that Ecological society Gradac realizes the only income based on the licenses sold to fishermen and from the facility located on the Šareno Platno, during the season, from March 1st. to September 30th.

In addition to traditional, ecologically oriented accommodation capacities, it is necessary to provide the construction of other tourist infrastructures, which will be in line with sustainable development. The examples of such infrastructure are visitor centers, information boards, walks and themes trails, observation points which should be constantly improving in order to enable access to interesting parts, or to allow approaches to species and ecosystems, as well as to encourage the desire to respect and protect natural environment.

The construction of a visitor center is especially significant. The visitor center should be a place where tourists can get the necessary information about the Gradac protected area, through oral lectures and information billboards (reservation maps, photos of flora and fauna), as well as other accompanying elements. Such visitor centers already exist in Serbia and significantly contribute to the education, promotion and development of tourism.

A successful model is an example of the Zasavica Visitor Center, which looks like a wooden structure with a tower height of 18 m and a view to

the pasture of 300 ha which is the widest and most beautiful part of the Zasavica stream (Figure 3). Within this building there are a souvenir shop, 2 rooms with 7 beds, as well as two additional rooms. In front, there is a wooden dock that leads to the boats and tourist ship “Umbra” by which visitors visit the reservation.

Figure 3: *Zasavica Visitor Center*



Source: *Vizitorski centar*, <http://www.zasavica.org.rs>

Another important visitor center was built at Mokra Gora (Figure 4).

Figure 4: *Mokra Gora Visitor Center*



Source: *Galerija fotografija*, <http://www.parkprirodemokragora.org>

This Visitor Center is recognized as a place where the awareness of environmental protection and sustainability will develop in the future. It was built mostly of wood, modeled on traditional chalets of this region. The center gathers those who are interested in environmental protection and the development of environmental awareness, enabling them to have seminars and meetings there. The center is also used by the Nature Park staff as a business-office complex: for example for the need of Mokra

Gora rangers, who are responsible for monitoring and protection of all 11,000 acres of this park. There is also a hotel section for guests who will stay here: restaurant and coffee shop on the ground floor, and 24 comfortable rooms with about 60 beds.

The promotion

Communication and education about Inland Water Destinations help to raise awareness about their values and biodiversity, and win support from tourists for their conservation. Therefore, promotion plays a major role in the sustainable development of tourism on the Gradac River, contributing to the popularization of the destination and attracting tourists, as well as to raising awareness of the environmental protection. The greatest contribution to the promotion of the Gradac River has certainly been given by the ecological association “Gradac”, that has a web site, where is possible to find significant information about flora and fauna, tourist attractions, speleology, fishing, etc. In addition to this association, the tourist organization Valjevo provides basic information on this protected natural area. Therefore, the promotion is limited to these two subjects as well as few less visited web sites that generally inform about trips in Serbia. Due to this situation, domestic tourists from Serbia do not get enough information and therefore do not know the potentials of the Gradac River. It is interesting that even “the Atlas of protected areas of Serbia”, created by the United Nations Development Program, did not recognize the significance of the Gradac River and therefore it was not presented in this publication. However, when it comes to fishermen as tourist, we have come to the conclusion that this market niche is well informed about fishing significance of the Gradac River, primarily through their associations and specialized web sites.

Conclusion

The development of tourism in protected areas that is in line with the principles of sustainable development is important because it provides the opportunity for visitors to explore natural resources, but at the same time contributes to better life of the local population. Rivers connect us to each other, nature, and future generations. The paper presents the example of the Gradac River as a nature-based tourism, which is facing the challenge of continuing its tourism development, but in accordance with the environment. Therefore, sustainable tourism development at the Gradac River destination should harmonize social, cultural, environmental and

economic requirements. In order to achieve this goal it is necessary to engage various stakeholders such as “Gradac” Association, the local community, companies, tourists, institutions, ecologists, etc. Only mutual cooperation can solve the dilemmas and obstacles to tourism development, referring to the lack of financial resources, lack of tourist infrastructure, inadequate promotion, as well as the need for more efficient environmental protection.

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